

Message Text

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USINFO FOR PGM/PP, NEA

E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT: AMERICAN WOMEN'S HIMALAYAN EXPEDITIONS

1. THE FIRST AMERICAN ALL-WOMEN MOUNTAINEERING EXPEDITION TO ATTEMPT THE CONQUEST OF A MAJOR HIMALAYAN PEAK DEPARTED KATHMANDU TODAY (AUGUST 14) FOR POKHARA, IN WESTERN NEPAL, WHERE THEY WILL BEGIN THE MONTH-LONG TREK TO THE BASE CAMP OF ANNAPURNA I, THE 26,558 FEET/8,091 METER MOUNTAIN THEY HOPE TO ASSAULT SUCCESSFULLY IN EARLY OCTOBER.

2. THE TEN WOMEN WHO COMPRISE THE AMERICAN WOMEN'S HIMALAYAN EXPEDITIONS (AWHE) ARE ALL EXPERIENCED HIGH ALTITUDE CLIMBERS WHO HAVE SCALED DEMANDING PEAKS IN THE ALPS, AFRICA, SOUTH AMERICA, AFGHANISTAN, THE USSR AND PAKISTAN. THEY ARE LED BY ARLENE BLUM, A 33-YEAR OLD BIOCHEMIST FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 1976 AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL EVEREST EXPEDITION.

3. THE AVERAGE AGE OF THE TEAM IS 35 AND THEIR PROFESSIONS ARE AS VARIED AS THEIR CLIMBING EXPERIENCES: A COMPUTER PROGRAMMER FROM STANFORD, A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING, AN OPHTHAMOLOGIST FROM SEATTLE, A PLANT ECOLOGIST IN ENGLAND AND A PHYSICAL THERAPIST WITH AN INTEREST IN
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SPORT-MEDICINE FROM SEATTLE.

4. THE CLIMBERS, PLUS TWO PHOTOGRAPHERS AND A BASE CAMP MANAGER, ALL THREE OF WHOM ARE ALSO AMERICAN WOMEN, WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY SIX HIGH ALTITUDE SHERPAS AND 200 PORTERS. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD IN KATHMANDU PRIOR TO DEPARTING FOR POKHARA, ARLENE BLUM ESTIMATED 13,000 POUNDS OF FOOD

AND EQUIPMENT HAVE BEEN ASSEMBLED FOR THE ASSAULT ON ANNA PURNA I, WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN CLIMBED BY AN AMERICAN OR A WOMEN.

5. THE FUNDS FOR THE \$80,000 EXPEDITION HAS BEEN RAISED LARGELY THROUGH THE SALES OF ATTRACTIVE T-SHIRTS THAT BEAR A LIKENESS OF ANNA PURNA I AND PROCLAIM THE WORDS "A WOMAN'S PLACE IS ON TOP." BLUM REPORTED THAT APPROXIMATELY \$60,000 WORTH OF THE T-SHIRTS HAVE BEEN SOLD THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE COME FROM FRIENDS OF AWHE AND ADVANCE RIGHTS FROM THE "NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC" MAGAZINE FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE EXPEDITION.

6. AT THE KATHMANDU PRESS CONFERENCE, WHERE MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION WERE WEARING THEIR POPULAR T-SHIRTS, BLUM WAS ASKED THE RATIONALE FOR AN ALL-WOMEN ASSAULT OF THE 8,000 METER HIMALAYAN PEAK. "PART OF THE REASON IS THAT THERE NEVER HAS BEEN AN ALL AMERICAN WOMEN'S TEAM TO THE HIMALAYAS," BLUM EXPLAINED, "BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE WANTED THE EXPERIENCE -- AS WOMEN -- OF PLANNING AND COORDINATING A HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION. AMERICAN WOMEN HAVE PARTICIPATED IN SUCH ASSAULTS BEFORE, BUT WE HAVE NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING IN THE ORGANIZING OF AN EXPEDITION BECAUSE THE LEADERS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MEN." STANLEY
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